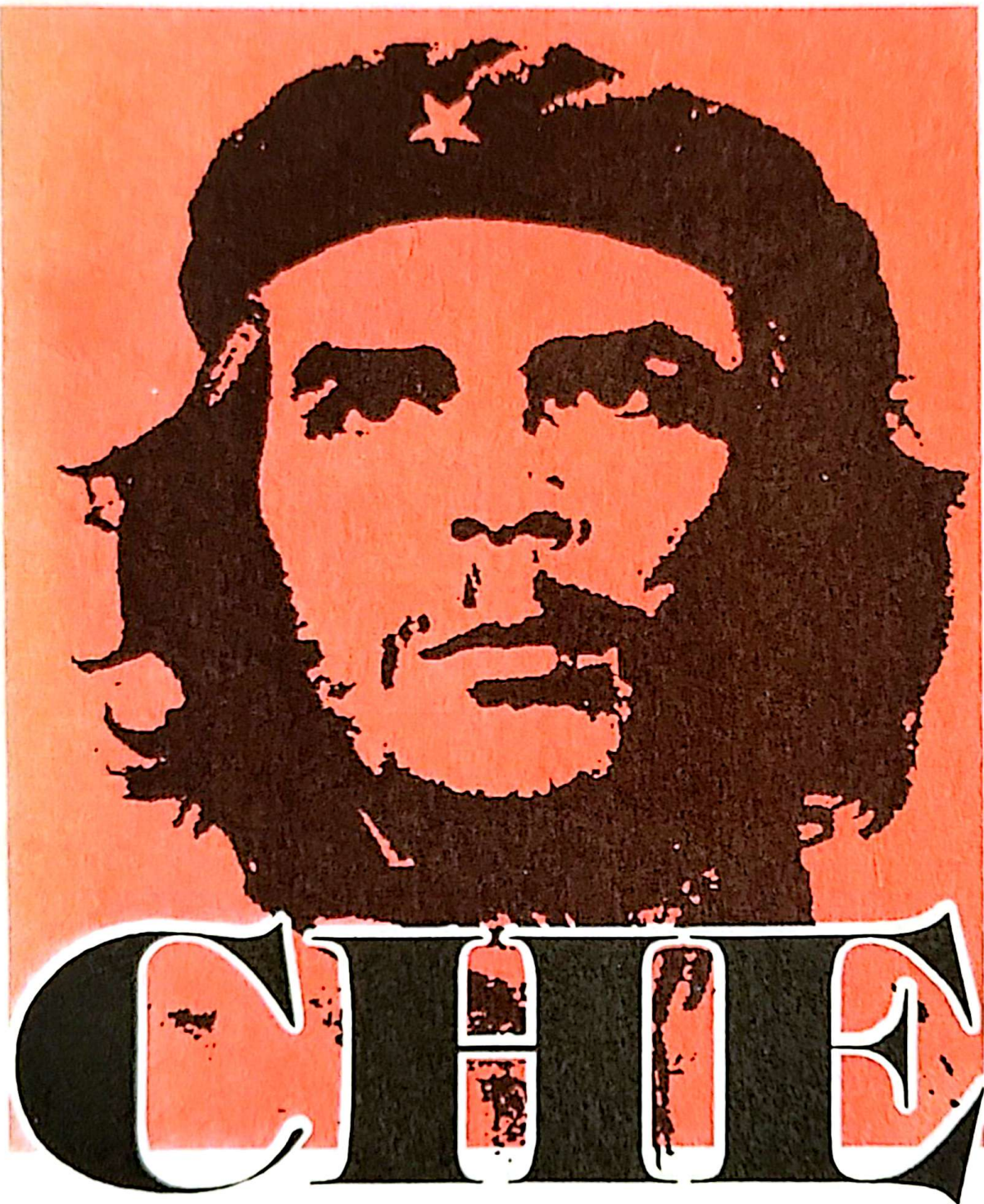
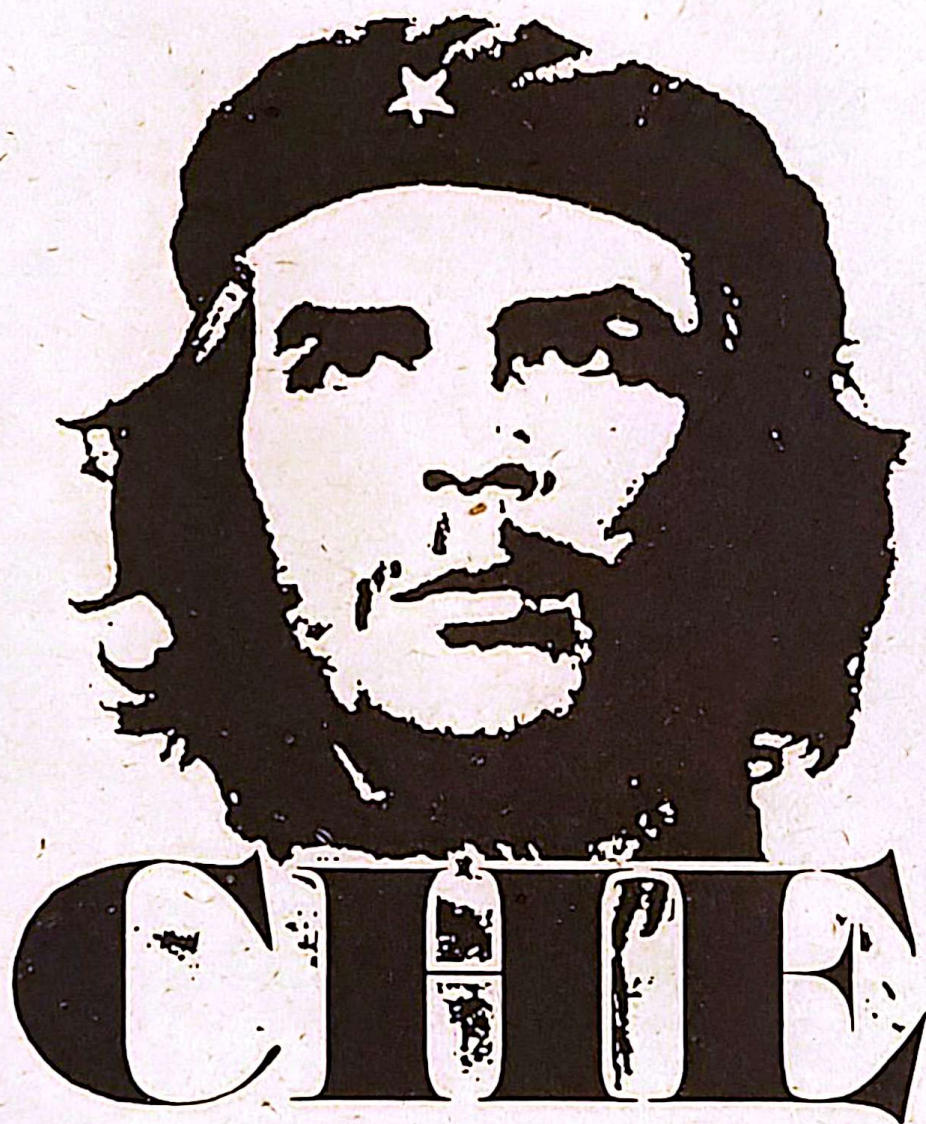


**39 years of an intense
and virtuous life**



**the Heroic
guerrilla fighter**

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I. INTRODUCTION

With this book, which is much more than a tribute to Che, who was an enemy of people lavishing honors on him, we are fulfilling a duty to you, young revolutionaries who weren't able to see him face danger in combat with complete selflessness, from Alegría de Pío to Santa Clara, and from the Congo to Bolivia; who weren't able to witness his tireless travels throughout the country building the future shoulder to shoulder with his people, patiently chiseling the men and women of the 21st century.

He was always known for his strong and resolute nature, a lover of invigorating forms of distraction, open-air activities, reading and sports.

His caliber is made manifest in every aspect of his life. Once and again he came out the victor in the battle against his asthma, an illness which ceaselessly tried to subdue him. While other youth of his social class conformed to a mediocre, comfortable or mercantile destiny, the young Guevara opted for less facile paths and did so with full awareness.

Che was a man of many virtues. In each one of them we of course find education, teachings, lessons for life. There is a quality, however, which we would like to highlight, since it is the one which defines him par excellence: his example.

He won the unlimited affection and admiration of all his subordinates during the war and it wasn't because he was an obliging or little demanding chief. On the contrary.

He won the respect, confidence and admiration of those who shared with him the tasks of building the economy and

this wasn't because he was a feeble, lazy or indolent leader. On the contrary.

He was always the first in combat. When there was a need for voluntaries to carry out the most difficult and dangerous missions one could count on him. Numerous episodes attest to this.

As a revolutionary leader he unconditionally gave himself over to organizing and developing the socialist economy. He tenaciously assumed every single one of the responsibilities entrusted to him, tirelessly carrying them out.

He was a man of Spartan will, who turned austerity into a way of life; education and self-improvement were like a cult for him; the intransigent and unyielding defense of the interests of the Revolution and the people, loyalty to and confidence in Fidel were Che's main principles.

All this and much more made him an example to follow, the model to be followed by communists, someone very close and dear to us, someone whom we should make an effort to imitate as much as possible.

II. MOST IMPORTANT STAGES OF THE LIFE AND WORK OF ERNESTO CHE GUEVARA

Ernesto Guevara de la Serna, architect Ernesto Guevara Lynch and Celia de la Serna Llosa's eldest son, was born on June 14, 1928 in Rosario, Argentina.

During his first year of life, while residing in Buenos Aires, he suffered his first asthma attacks. The doctors recommended a change of climate and because of this in 1933 his family moved to Altagracia, in Córdoba province. According to his father, they lived there from when Ernesto was five until he turned 16.

Celia, Che's mother, explained that she taught Ernesto how to read and write and that because of his asthma he couldn't go to school. "He only went to school on a regular basis in second and third grade; he did fifth and sixth grade by going only when he could. His siblings used to copy the lessons for him and he would study at home."

Throughout his life he was a passionate reader. His father recounts that there were thousands of books in their library: the classics of universal literature, books on history, philosophy, psychology, art, adventures, some of them in French, a language Celia taught her son. There works by Marx, Engels and Lenin, with which he became acquainted in his early youth. Since childhood he enjoyed reading poetry and it was his life companion; a notebook containing his favorite poems was found together with his Bolivia diary.

As a child he fought against the asthma which was always



In 1933 with his sister Celia and brother Roberto.



At 15 during his trip through Argentina.



With a group of friends from the rugby team.

persecuting him, but he never let it overcome him, he constantly tried to dominate it. He didn't want to do less than his playmates. This is why he used to run with them in the open air, go out hunting with pellet rifles, go on long walks or on horseback; they knew the names of all the trees and birds in the region. His father says that Ernesto was always very studious and he got to know very well the poor people who lived in the surrounding area. He was an excellent soccer player, played rugby, golf and chess, went in for gliding and made long trips on bicycle; he liked impressionist painting and knew a bit about music.

In 1941 the Guevara family moved to the city of Córdoba so that Ernesto could attend high school. During this stage of his life he learned to sleep in the open, to improvise a tent, to withstand physical exhaustion, rain and cold. It was then that he started to get interested in Argentine politics.

In 1942 he met Alberto Granado in a soccer game where Granado was playing for the university team and Che for the Atlético Atalaya Club.

During that time Che practiced cycling, swimming and diving.

When he was only 15 years old he traveled throughout Argentina on his bicycle. His sports feat didn't go unnoticed in his country or abroad and an advertising company took a picture of him and publicized a poster of an athletic young man firmly holding on to the handlebars of a bike.

In 1947 the Guevara family went to live in Buenos Aires and Ernesto enrolled in the School of Medicine, a decision he made when his grandmother died.

While at university he did his practice at the Allergy Research Institute. He worked as a librarian and although he earned very little he helped out his family.

He was interested in research and the cure of leprosy; he wasn't scared of the lepers and didn't reject those unfortunate persons who were abandoned and forgotten by society. He

was sympathetic to them and was already thinking of consecrating his life to curing them.

While he continued with his studies of medicine and surgery in the Argentine capital, he played rugby with the Tala team.

His enthusiasm for sports was so great that, apart from practicing other sports, he founded a sports magazine by the name of *Tackle*, thus taking his first steps in journalism. He was the magazine's editor-in-chief, worked as a journalist and photographer and signed his articles with the pseudonym of Chanco.

In 1951 he traveled through the Atlantic and the Caribbean working as a sailor on an oil tanker.

From December 1951 through August 1952 he traveled with Alberto Granado through many Latin American countries and visited Chile, Peru, Colombia and Venezuela.

They were interested in every aspect and with a critical eye and profound thought they analyzed the Latin American reality. This was especially true in Ernesto's case, for whom the world seemed to already have a singular dimension. His visit to the Chuquicamata copper mines in Chile was especially revealing for him, because in no other place like this were the youths able to witness such a degree of exploitation of the workers, of discrimination against the natives by the United States. The pain of Our America started to deeply penetrate the mind of the Argentine student: therein lies the naked truth of neocolonial reality.

After this first trip he wrote an article entitled "Let's Understand Each Other", in which he said: *...That our view was never panoramic, always fleeting and not always equitably informed, and judgments are too categorical?... The person who wrote these notes died on setting foot in Argentina, I am no longer he who orders them and gives them the final touch; at least I'm not my inner self. This aimless wandering through "Our America" has changed me more than I thought it would....*

In the capital of Peru they met a prestigious scholar, Dr. Salvador Pesce, who wrote a book on indigenous people. At his request the two Argentines read the book and when they were asked for their opinion, Granado chose an answer to please the author. Ernesto, on his part, made an agonizing effort to shield himself, perhaps to not hurt the old-man's feelings. In the end he had to answer:

Look, doctor.... It is unbelievable that such an intelligent man as yourself, with your capacity and courage, could have written such a mediocre book.... This book is bad because it is negative, because it's not Marxist, because it describes an indigenous people's fatalism which is not true, because this is our point of view and not theirs.

This is how Ernesto was at 23: sparing in words, but radical and direct, substantial and passionately fond of justice and truth, and already having a developed political conscience.

At the end of this trip, he displayed his fervent Latin Americanism when he wrote in his diary the following about his tour of Peru:

...after this trip, we believe more than ever before that the division of America into uncertain and illusory nationalities is completely fictitious. We are one mestizo race which from Mexico to the Strait of Magallanes presents notable ethnographic similarities. This is why...I toast to Peru and to a United America.

In 1953 he graduated as a doctor in medicine. And it is in July 1953 — by one of those coincidences in history — that he started on his second trip through Latin America. On this occasion he visited Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Panama, Costa Rica, El Salvador and Guatemala.

When Ernesto toured the South American countries on the Pacific coast, when he visited the copper mines, the indigenous towns and the leprosariums, where he displayed his profound humanism, his revolutionary way of thinking and his firm anti-imperialism grew by bounds and leaps.



With Alberto Granado in the Amazon in 1952.

In 1950, with patients from the San Francisco de Chafar leprosarium.



Mort, Carlos (Karl):
 siete remanentes, defensor de la fue-
 fueron forjados entre exámenes de in-
 creíble convicción. Mort había sido
 profundamente hostil desde sus principios;
 consideraba que la función esencial
 de los trabajadores era satisfacer sus
 propias necesidades y proporcionar
 un modo de vida a su familia.
 Pero cuando la
 defensa de la Comuna peruana
 en su heroica locura lo con-
 venció a él mismo, como Gran-
 dante en la historia moderna,
 de atropar violentos y gloriosos
 saladores, Mort volvió a su
 defensa a su vez, exceptuando el
 Manifiesto Comunista, es el pequeño
 más brillante que escribió de su
 vida civil en Francia, publicado
 una declaración sobre el estado

Facsimile of one of the pages of the philosophical text he started to write at 17.

During his passage through Costa Rica he described that he had the opportunity to appreciate the dominion of the United Fruit Company and to once again corroborate how horrible "those capitalist octopuses" were. While there he met Cubans Calixto García and Severino Rosell, who had participated in the attack on the Moncada Garrison.

On arriving in Guatemala in December 1953, notwithstanding the tension and the agitated moments Arbenz' government was going through, Che completely adhered to the sister country's government program, whose main objectives were to make the country an economically independent nation and, consequently, raise the people's standard of living. When the government's overthrow took place he wrote a series of reflections in which he arrived at the conclusion that ***treason continues being the patrimony of the army and once again the maxim that the true principle of democracy is doing away with the army has been proved right. Arbenz didn't think that a people in arms is an invincible power....***

He was a resolute admirer of Jacobo Arbenz' government and he tried to form a group of young men to confront the invaders. He was of the opinion that it was necessary to fight and resist but this was not achieved. FBI agents detained and murdered all those who could be a threat to the United Fruit Company.

He wasn't allowed to practice his profession and to subsist he wrote articles in the local press and was a door-to-door book vendor.

In Guatemala he met Hilda Gadea, a Peruvian economist who was exiled there. He also became friends with Níco López and a group of Cuban revolutionaries who had participated in the Moncada attack. They told Che about what had happened in Cuba on July 26, 1953, and of their decision, once Fidel Castro and the other comrades were liberated, to continue the struggle.

In September 1954 the young Guevara went to Mexico

where he would face new economic difficulties. He had to do several jobs, among them that of a traveling photographer with his Guatemalan friend Julio Roberto *El Patojo* Cáceres; and a reporter during the 2nd Pan American Games.

In 1955 he was able to work as a doctor in the allergy ward of Mexico City General Hospital.

He carried out research on allergies and the role of doctors in Latin America. He also did research on the action of cortisone on antibodies; the action of hyaluronidase on intestinal permeability; the identification of the placenta's histaminase; allergy tests done in serum and not on the patient's skin and 17 cytoosteroids.

He presented a paper on semidigested food at the Mexican Allergy Congress and it was published in the magazine *Alergia*.

At the Autonomous National University of Mexico (UNAM) he attended courses on economics as an auditor.

He married Hilda Gadea in the summer of 1955 and from this union was born a daughter, Hilda Guevara Gadea, on February 15, 1956.

In an interview Hildita characterized him as follows:

"He was always very concerned about the well-being of his children, not in the material sense but whether we were happy, content, that we enjoyed life but at the same time being forming as new persons."

"On the other hand, he was very understanding, affectionate and playful. He enjoyed sitting down and chatting with us. These were conversations in which he always had something educational to say to the five of us, who had different ages."

"He had very little time, but he always found time for us and took the utmost advantage of it..., on Sundays we would go to voluntary work. At home he would lie on the floor and we would massage his back and things like that; we would play with him."

"We were always treated with much affection, understanding and iron discipline, but not going beyond what is

necessary for a child of a certain age. He wanted us to be just like other children, with their funny ideas, their pranks, but at the same time disciplined in certain things of life. He always inculcated in us that we had to study, that above everything else we had to study a lot because without knowledge one couldn't achieve anything, since it was the basis for dominating nature."

"When we sat down to watch boxing on TV he would always bet on the boxer who was winning; when 'his fighter' started to lose, he would start betting on the other, he would always win and we would have a lot of fun."¹

In 1955, while in Mexico, he met for the second time with Níco López, who presented him to Raúl Castro who later presented him to Fidel Castro.

...In Mexico I also saw some of the 26th of July group whom I had met in Guatemala and I started a friendship with Raúl Castro, Fidel's youngest brother. He presented me to the head of the Movement when they were already planning the Invasion of Cuba....

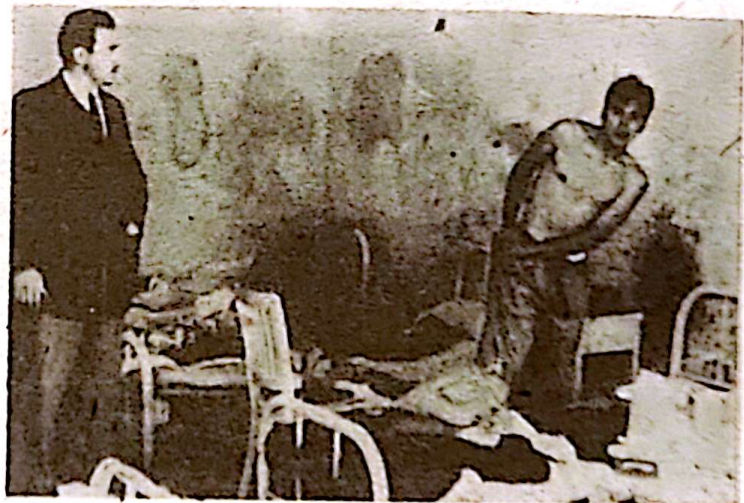
I spent the whole night talking with Fidel. By dawn I was already the doctor for his future expedition. In reality, after my experience I had of my travels throughout Latin America and to top it off Guatemala, I didn't need much to be incited to participate in any revolution against a tyrant, but Fidel impressed me as being an extraordinary man. He would confront and resolve the hardest of problems. He had an exceptionable belief that once he left for Cuba he would arrive. That once he got there he was going to wage battle. And that by fighting he was going to triumph. I shared his optimism. One had to do something, to struggle, to concretize. One had to stop crying and flight. And to show his country's people that they could have faith in him, because what he said he would do he would do it, he

1 Verde Olivo magazine, June 6, 1988, p.27



With his daughter Hildita on visiting day in the Mexico City jail.

In June 1956 he was arrested with Fidel Castro by the Mexican police.



With the future *Granma* expedition members in Mexico.

launched his famous: "In '56 we will be free or martyrs" and announced that before the end of that year he would land in Cuba at the head of his expeditionary army.²

When recalling those times Fidel said of Che:

"...He was a specialist in Marxism-Leninism, he was self-taught, very studious, he was convinced of what he was doing. And life taught him..., and so when we met Che he was already a formed revolutionary; furthermore, he was very talented, very intelligent, with a great capacity for theory...."³

In 1956 the Cuban revolutionaries were training for guerrilla warfare, aided by Spanish Civil War general Alberto Bayo, in the Santa Rosa ranch, which was located in a place full of wild trees, 35 kilometers from Mexico City. Che always got the highest mark: 10 points. Here Che not only studied but also taught his comrades how to deal with bone fractures, bandage wounds and give injections. He even served as a "guinea pig", which is why during the practice lessons his students gave him more than 100 shots.

On June 22 the Mexican security forces detained Fidel in a street in the Mexican capital, and then entered Maria Antonia's house; they left an ambush there; and on the 24th the police attacked Santa Rosa ranch, where they were able to capture Che and some of his comrades. After a month of imprisonment they were all set free, except Ernesto Guevara and Calixto García, who were held under charges of illegal entry to Mexico.

In July 1956 he explained in a letter his relationship with the future Cuban process:

A great dose of passion and audacity is necessary to carry out any task, and as a human group we have this...when one gets the disease which I have it seems to get closer and won't let go until death...and when I arrive

2 Ernesto Guevara Lynch: *Mi hijo el Che (My Son Che)*, p. 51. Editorial Arte y Literatura, Havana, 1988.

3 Frel Betto: *Fidel y la religión (Fidel and Religion)*, p. 374. Published by the Council of States Publishing Office, Havana, 1985.



In the Sierra Maestra he participated in the planning of guerrilla actions. Here, standing beside Fidel, he indicates the route; standing by are Calixto García, Ramiro Valdés and Juan Almeida.



Argentine Journalist Jorge Ricardo Masetti interviewed him in the Sierra Maestra.

In a new country it won't be to tour the land, see museums and ruins, but (because this has always interested me) to join the people's struggle.

As ordered by Fidel, on November 25 at two in the morning the *Granma* cabin cruiser left from the Tuxpan River; Che and Calixto were the last to board. The *Granma*, with 82 men on board, overloaded and with its lights out, sailed for Cuba with difficulty in a stormy night that was forbidden for sailing. On December 2, after an arduous voyage, the expedition members landed near Las Coloradas beach, in Belic, in the former province of Oriente, today Granma.

III. FIRST EXPERIENCES IN CUBA

According to Che: ...we landed in a hurry, taking with us the essential, we went into the swamp when we were attacked by enemy planes.... We spent several hours getting out of the swamp.... We were on terra firma, adrift, stumbling; we were an army of shadows, of ghosts, walking as if we were following some obscure psychological mechanism's impulse. During the voyage we had spent seven days of continuous hunger and seasickness, added to three more days, terrible days, on land. Exactly ten days from our departure from Mexico, at dawn on December 5, after a night march interrupted by dizzy spells and fatigue and the troop's rest periods, we reached a place which was paradoxically known as Alegría de Pío [Pío's Happiness]....

...We heard shooting; in a matter of seconds there was a hail of bullets...surrounding the group of 82 men.... A burst of machine-gun fire which was no different from the

*others reached us.... I felt a strong blow on my chest and a wound on my neck; I thought I was dead....*⁴

This was Che's first fighting experience and the first time he shed his internationalist blood in our country. A bullet hit a box of ammunition he was carrying over his chest, ricocheted and lodged beside his spinal column.

On January 17, 1957, Che took part in the battle of La Plata, where the Rebel Army had its first victory. Later on he participated in the one at Arroyo del Infierno (January 22, 1957) and at El Uvero (May 28, 1957).

In July a new column was created. Che, who had been promoted to captain on July 12, was to head this column. Nine days later, on July 21, Fidel raised his rank to that of commander and chief of Column No. 4 at Valle de la Mesa. He was the first combatant to be promoted to this rank by the commander-in-chief of the rebel forces.

From July to December he participated in the fighting in Bueycito (July 31, 1957), El Hombrito (August 30, 1957), Mar Verde (November 29, 1957), Altos de Conrado (December 8, 1957) and the first attack on Pino del Agua (September 17, 1957); the second attack on Pino del Agua took place on February 16, 1958.

During the lulls, Che reinforced the guerrilla group's rear guard by organizing first aid stations, field hospitals, a small blacksmith's workshop and armory, and workshops where footwear, backpacks, cartridge belts, etc. were hand made.

The political situation in the Sierra was still very precarious; its inhabitants' political development was very superficial. It was then that, through Che's initiative and under his leadership, the *El Cubano Libre* newspaper started to be published in the Sierra Maestra on November 4, 1957. Subsequently, Che founded *Radio Rebelde*. The first broadcast came out on

4 Ernesto Che Guevara: *Escritos y discursos (Writings and Speeches)*, Vol. 2, pp.3; 10-11, Editorial Ciencias Sociales, Havana, 1972.

February 24, 1958, and the station's programming was gradually improved until it acquired a large international and national audience.

After the combat at Santa Rosa, Che was given the responsibility of heading the school for recruits in Minas del Frío. The young soldiers who arrived from the city went to this school, where they were given military training and received lessons in politics to later form part of the guerrilla detachments.

At the beginning of the rebels' spring counteroffensive (May, June and July 1958), the members of the guerrilla army were already well-trained and experienced fighters.

IV. THE INVASION CAMPAIGN

On August 21, 1958, to commemorate the 1895 Independence War's westward march, the "Antonio Maceo" Invasion Column No. 2, commanded by Camilo Cienfuegos, left from El Salto to carry the war to the western part of the country, that is, to Pinar del Río.

The "Ciro Redondo" Column No. 8, led by Commander Ernesto Che Guevara, departed on August 31 from El Jíbaro toward the territory comprising former Las Villas province.

Right from the start, Column No. 8 confronted many difficulties, marching through flooded areas, plagued by mosquitoes which made the troop's advance insufferable. On September 9, in the place known as La Federal, they took part in a short combat. Previously, in Cuatro Compañeros, they had waged a hard battle. They marched through desolate areas, full of mud and water, hindering their advance through Camagüey. However, just when the situation had become very tense, in the distance they saw the peaks of the Escambray mountain range

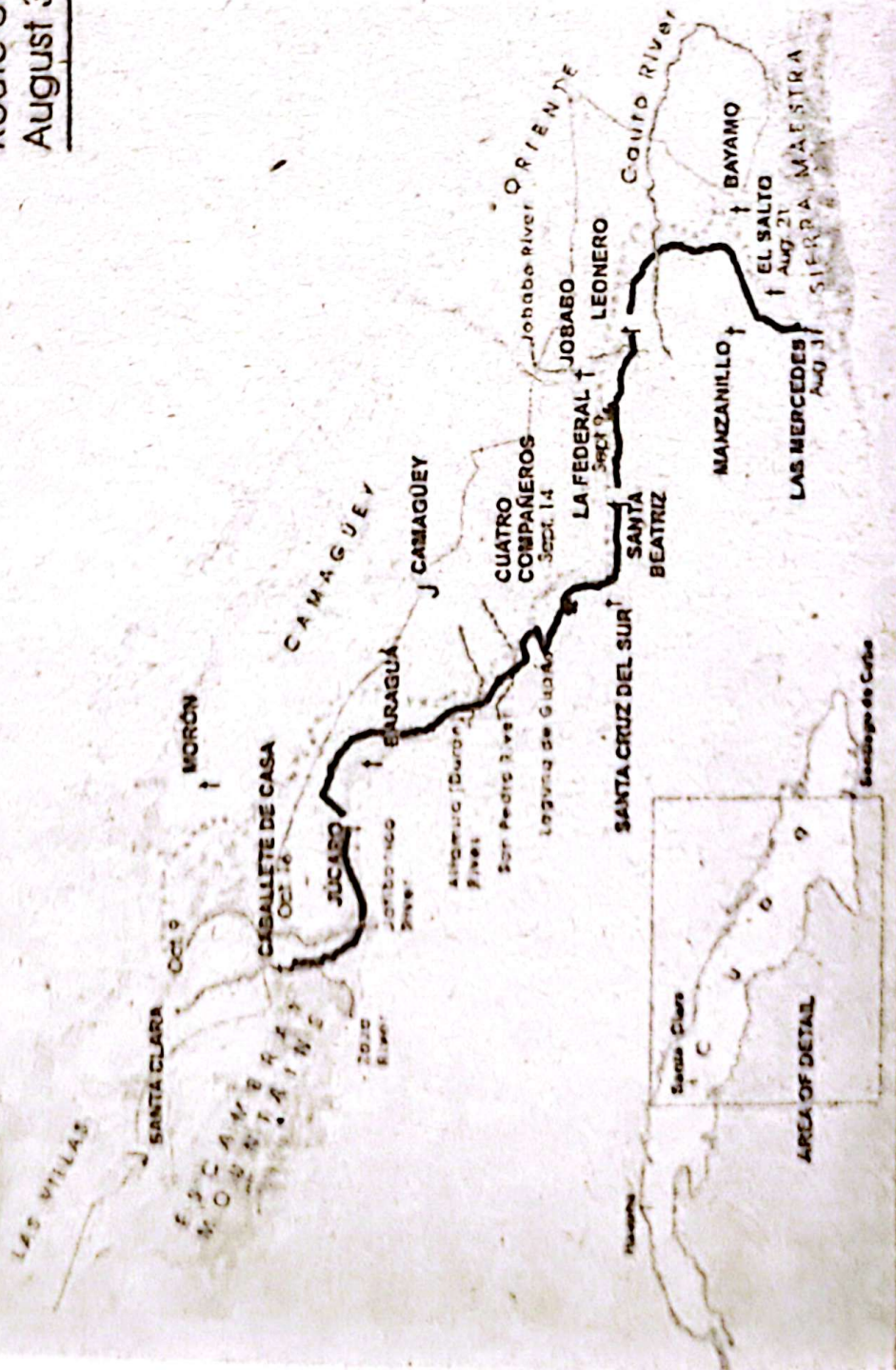
Route of Column no. 8 August 31-October 16, 1958



Column no. 8 (Chm Guevara)

Column no. 2 (Comilla Chantalego)

Central Highway



and the guerrilla fighters' mood changed. On October 16 they arrived in the mountainous region of Las Villas, and Che sets up camp in Caballete de Casa, where he would later establish a school for guerrilla warfare.

V. PRINCIPAL BATTLES WAGED BY CHE IN LAS VILLAS

On October 26 and 27 Che attacked and captured the Gūinia de Miranda garrison. On November 8 he issued an agrarian reform decree in the Escambray.

In December, the offensive being carried out by Che's forces was intensified. The roads were blocked; the central railway was interrupted at several points. The town of Fomento was taken on December 18, 1958 after a battle that had started on the 15th. On the 21st they attacked the towns of Cabaiguán and Guayos, the latter surrendering in a matter of hours and Cabaiguán on the 23rd. Fighting broke out in Placetas and on the 25th the town is captured. On the 26th Sancti Spíritus fell into the hands of the rebels. On that same day, Remedios, Caibarién and Trinidad were liberated. The Battle of Santa Clara was waged from December 29 to January 1, 1959.

On January 2, 1959, after receiving Fidel Castro's instructions by phone, Che leaves for Havana at 5:30 in the morning. When he arrived at La Cabaña fortress he took charge of the situation without firing a single shot.

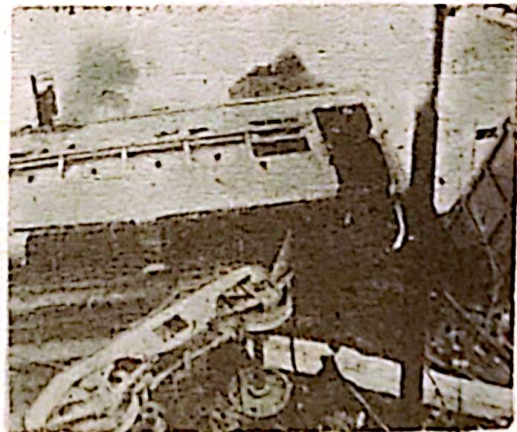
Che's military record includes 21 combats. He instilled great confidence and trust in all those who fought at his side because of the multiple personal virtues and qualities which characterized him as a military chief and comrade. Outstanding among them are:



The El Pedrero pact was signed in Dos Arroyos, in the former province of Las Villas, by the 26th of July Movement and the 13th of March Revolutionary Directorate; the Popular Socialist Party joined later on.



The troops commanded by Che take the town of Fomento.



A well-thought-out action: the derailing of the dictatorship's armored train.



Ernesto Guevara led the taking of Santa Clara. On his left, combatant Aleida March.

— **BOLD COURAGE.** He wasn't afraid of nothing or anyone and constantly took risks without giving thought for his life.

On one occasion, as a result of five shots which wounded him in his legs when they were ambushed on a road by three soldiers, comrade Joel Iglesias lost consciousness. The comrades who came behind him, who were really brave, stayed about four or five meters from where Joel was.

On hearing the shots, Che immediately goes there and when he arrived the men reported that Joel was wounded. Without asking for further information he went to where Joel was, picked him up and carried him to the place where the rest of the comrades were. A few minutes later, several rebel fighters captured the three soldiers and when they were asked why they hadn't shot at Che as they had done with Joel, they answered that that man who had carried away the wounded fighter had surprised them, since they weren't expecting anyone to abruptly take away the man, that really surprised them.

— **CAPACITY AND INTELLIGENCE.** Che was capable of organizing any type of activity with magnificent results, be it a combat, the distribution of supplies to the guerrilla fighters under very difficult conditions or a political activity at a certain place, that is, he had exceptional qualities from the military point of view to organize a combat, or to organize any type of activity.

— **PROVEN WILLPOWER.** Che forged that willpower on a day to day basis. His battle against his asthma is well-known by all. By sheer willpower he was able to put up with the exhausting marches without having the adequate medicine for his illness. When he had an asthma attack, he would make an extraordinary effort to carry his backpack and his weapon just like the rest of his comrades, and only on rare occasions, during very difficult moments, did he stay behind or put up camp somewhere, but never abandoning his weapon.

— **SPIRIT OF SACRIFICE.** He demonstrated this on many

occasions. Examples of this are his internationalist spirit when he came as a volunteer on the *Granma* cabin cruiser, when he fulfilled all types of missions, making him one of the most outstanding chiefs in our army. He shed his blood for Cuba and the Revolution not only in Alegría de Pío, but also in Pino del Agua, La Plata, Mar Verde and many other battles. He sacrificed his youth and his life for the freedom of the peoples, and this is an example we can never forget. With this spirit of sacrifice he always asked to carry out the most difficult and complex tasks, which is why he won for himself the admiration, respect and affection of all the revolutionaries in the world.

— A DEMANDING ATTITUDE. He fought head on against bad quality work, demanding from all comrades the same thing, from officers to soldiers, without making distinctions. He didn't allow any type of privileges for him or for others. He rejected all those people who tried to win him over through favors.

He applied this demanding attitude to himself. He fulfilled with absolute loyalty the Commander-in Chief's orders, without making mistakes and using initiatives. Che was always very disciplined and he demanded this from everyone. Through his personal example, which was his greatest virtue, he made sure that his subordinates fulfilled orders and all the established norms, based on a conscientious, ironclad and strong discipline. His discipline was humane and just, and with it he imposed respect and order among his subordinates everywhere he went.

— A SPIRIT OF CONSTANT SELF-IMPROVEMENT. Even though he had an enormous intellectual capacity, he was always studying and learning from everyone, from campesinos regarding the countryside, finding one's bearings and all aspects of the life of our guerrilla fighters, and he demanded that all his subordinates improve themselves.

All the virtues and qualities which Che had and which we have described here give an idea of his personality, his capacity as a chief and as a guerrilla fighter, making those who

fought under his orders feel absolute confidence in victory, despite the difficulties and the dangers they confronted.

VI. THE MOST IMPORTANT MOMENTS OF HIS LIFE AFTER THE TRIUMPH OF THE REVOLUTION

At the triumph of the Revolution he was assigned the post of military chief of La Cabaña fortress.

On February 7, 1959, the Revolutionary Government promulgated the Fundamental Law of the Republic of Cuba. The basic axioms of the 1940 Constitution were maintained, but the necessary modifications were made corresponding to the new stage the country was living through. One of the articles to be modified was no. 12, which appeared under the heading of "On Nationality". To this article was added the clause "Cubans by birth...." "Foreigners who have served in the armed struggle against the tyranny overthrown on December 31, 1958, in the ranks of the Rebel Army, during two or more years, and having the rank of Commander for a year at least, as long as they can vouch for these conditions in the form established by law."

The aforementioned clause was applicable in only one case. On February 9, 1959, Ernesto Guevara de la Serna, for services rendered to Cuba, was declared a Cuban citizen by birth by the Council of Ministers.

On June 2, 1959 he married for the second time, this time with his comrade in arms from the Escambray Mountains, Aleída March de la Torre, with whom he had four children: Aleida, Camilo, Celia and Ernesto.

On June 12 he went on a lengthy tour of African and Asian



Che and Aleida were married in June 1959.



Ernesto Che Guevara and Fidel Castro.

After fulfilling his multiple responsibilities he would participate in voluntary work.



Che, Raúl Castro and other leaders at a work meeting.

countries. He returned on September 5 after visiting Egypt, Japan (Tokyo and Hiroshima), Indonesia, Ceylon,⁵ Pakistan, Morocco and Yugoslavia.

On October 21, 1960, heading a Cuban trade delegation, Che left for his first visit to the socialist countries, where he toured Czechoslovakia, the USSR and China. Later on he visited the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

On August 8, 1961, in the name of the Cuban Revolution, Commander Ernesto Che Guevara voiced his denunciation of US imperialism and its neocolonialist plans, enshrined in the newly-established Alliance for Progress. In a press conference to inform the Cuban people of the results of the meeting he said: ***In Punta del Este, for the first time at a Latin American meeting, there was someone who disagreed.***

When President Fidel Castro recalled Che's work during his stay in Cuba, he said: "His multifarious intelligence was capable of carrying out, with the maximum of security, any kind of task. And in this way he brilliantly represented our nation at numerous international conferences, in the same way as he also brilliantly led soldiers in battle, in the same way as he was a model worker in any of the institutions he was assigned to lead. There were no days or hours of rest for him! And if we looked at his office windows, there was always a light on until very late at night, studying, or better said, working or studying. Because he would analyze all the problems, he was an indefatigable reader. His thirst for knowledge was practically insatiable, and those hours stolen from sleep he would dedicate to studying."⁶

5 Renamed Sri Lanka in 1972.

6 Fidel Castro: "Speech given at the solemn ceremony in memory of Comandante Ernesto Che Guevara". *Ediciones el Orientador Revolucionario (OR-26)*, p. 43. Published by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba's Revolutionary Orientation Department, Havana, 1967.

During his stay in Cuba, Che stood out as an organizer of the current Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR). He was a founding member of the magazine *Verde Olivo*, for which he wrote numerous articles, anecdotes and short stories. Fidel appointed him head of the Training and Culture Department, a post which he carried out simultaneously with numerous other tasks and his personal pursuits, since in addition to his insatiable thirst for reading he was very fond of sports. Everyone knows of his love for chess, which he played even during the most difficult days of the armed struggle against the Batista dictatorship; he always carried a small chess board and pieces with him. After the triumph, he consistently participated in the "Capablanca" Memorial tournaments. Despite his many responsibilities, he regularly played soccer with the Cuban team, in addition to golf, game fishing, gliding, shooting, baseball and many other sports.

He liked to pilot planes and, according to Eliseo de la Campa, his pilot after the triumph of the Revolution: "Che was a magnificent pilot. He thought and acted as such."

"He taught me to hold to the ethical principal of being a humane pilot. He was very attentive with the men responsible for plane maintenance."

"When a pilot would fly on his own for the first time, we used to wait for him to land and then place him in a barrel of water and pour earth and oil over him. But due to our respect for Che it never crossed our minds to do something like that to him."

"With the passing of time he confessed to me that he had felt hurt on that occasion, because we hadn't done with him what we did with the others, and had missed that moving part of his first solo flight."

"Of course, when Che flew on his own we hadn't had the chance to get to know him; if we had we would have taken that into consideration. Because of his unaffectedness and modesty he didn't accept being treated differently from others."

He fulfilled diplomatic and political missions abroad. He was

assigned the task of industrializing the country. Subsequently, due to difficulties related to financial resources and hard currency, Fidel decided to place him at the head of the National Bank of Cuba, a task which he successfully carried out.

During the difficult moments of threats of aggression, Che fulfilled missions that were of the utmost importance; for example, during the Missile Crisis and the Bay of Pigs invasion, Fidel placed Che at the head of Havana's western region, including Pinar del Río, as military and political chief.

He was outstanding as a political leader, above all because of his close ties with the masses. In the institutions where he had responsibilities, he would visit the workers, giving them instructions, controlling the work, making demands on the comrades and, at the same time, working with them; he constantly took on voluntary work and was its main promoter and example. He had the conviction that voluntary work ennobled human beings and gave them a different vision of life, especially when it was essentially the result of their interior strength and not merely motivated by external pressures.

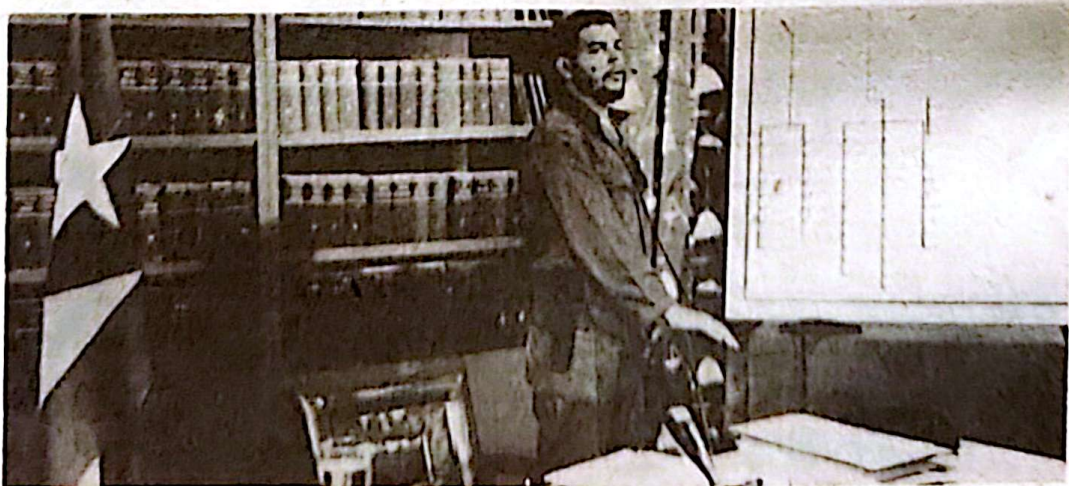
He had great faith in youth and gave major significance to the care and formation of young people, to his trust in them and his certainty that the future of the socialist homeland would be assured in the measure of our capacity to prepare them correctly, creating in them the qualities inherent in young communists. According to Che, the most notable of those qualities are: ... ***a great sensitivity in the face of problems, great sensitivity in the face of injustice, a nonconformity when something is done the wrong way, whoever instructed it. To come out and say everything they don't understand. To discuss problems and ask for explanations. To declare war on formalism, on all types of formalism. To always be open to new experiences, so as to shape the entire experience of humanity, which has been making progress for many years on the road to socialism; to confront all the concrete conditions in the country, the realities existing in Cuba. And to think — every***



In Punta del Este, Uruguay, in 1961, he denounced the so-called Alliance for Progress.



In December 1964 he represented Cuba at the UN's 19th General Assembly.



Che in his office.

single one of them — about how to change this reality, about how to improve it.

*That is: what is being asked of all young communists is that they be essentially humane, so humane that they will come close to the best of the human condition, purifying the best in men and women through work, study, continuous solidarity with the people and with all the peoples of the world, to develop their sensibility to such a point that they feel anguished when a person is murdered in any part of the world and become enthused when, in some corner of the world, a new flag of freedom is hoisted.*⁷ This is the way Che thought, this is how he acted.

On December 11, 1964, in the name of the Cuban government, he spoke before the UN General Assembly, where he made a masterful denunciation of US aggressions against Cuba and made clear his Latin Americanist concept by stating:

There is no small enemy or insignificant power, because the peoples are no longer isolated. As the Second Declaration of Havana establishes: "The Latin American people are not weak because they form part of a family of 200 million sisters and brothers who are suffering the same miseries, who harbor the same feelings, have the same enemy, have one single dream of having a better future and who are counting on the solidarity of all honest men and women of the world."

In his second speech, using the right to reply, he emphasized:

...I was born in Argentina; this is no secret. I'm Cuban and I'm also Argentine and — if your excellencies from Latin America are not offended — just like anyone and whenever it may be necessary, I would be ready to give my life for the liberation of any of the countries of Latin America, without asking anyone for anything, without

7 Ernesto Che Guevara: *Obra Revolucionaria*, No. 30, pp. 20-21.

demanding anything, without exploiting anyone. And this transitory representative in this assembly is not the only prepared to do so. All the people of Cuba have this disposition. All the people of Cuba are aroused each time an injustice is committed, not only in Latin America, but in the whole world. We could quote yet again Martí's marvelous apothegm that all true men should feel on their cheek the blow given to any man's cheek. The entire Cuban people feel this way, this is how they perceive it, your excellencies.⁸

Between January and March 14, 1965, Che toured several African countries: Mali, the Congo, Guinea, Ghana, Dahomey, Tanzania, Egypt and Algeria.

On February 24 he participated as an observer in the 2nd Economic Seminar of the Organization of Solidarity for Africa and Asia held in Algiers. At this meeting he stated the following:

There are no frontiers in the struggle to the death against imperialism.

Meanwhile, in March 1965, the Congolese revolutionaries founded the Supreme Council of the Revolution and its leader, Gaston Soumaliot, asked Cuba for military aid: instructors and combatants.

In April of that same year, Ernesto Che Guevara again left Cuba for the Congo, using the name of Ramón Benítez, as head of the Cuban aid mission, to support the guerrilla movement in that country, where he remained until November 1965. Of the Cuban combatants with him, only Israel Reyes (*Braulio*), José María Martínez Tamayo (*Papi*), Harry Villegas (*Pombo*) and Carlos Coello (*Tuma* or *Tumaini*), went on to fight with Che in the Bolivian guerrilla movement.

On April 20, 1965, working in the sugar cane fields, Fidel granted an interview to foreign correspondents and said the

8 Ernesto Che Guevara: *Escritos y discursos*, vol. 9, pp. 304 and 309. Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, Havana, 1972.

following of Che: "The only thing I can tell you about Commander Guevara is that he will always be wherever he is most useful for the Revolution.... I believe his tour through Africa was very useful: he is a multifaceted man. Possessed of an exceptional understanding, he is one of the most complete leaders."

Concerning the role played by Che in the Congo, Fidel commented:

"He was also very interested in international problems, Africa's problems. Around that time, the mercenary intervention in the former Belgian Congo, now Zaire⁹, had taken place; Lumumba's death, all that; a neocolonial regime, and there was an armed struggle movement in Zaire. We have never published that. At that point, the revolutionary movement asked us for help, that we send them instructors, combatants, an internationalist mission.

"Soumialot was the leader at that time. It was the same movement, but Lumumba had died.

"Then, I myself suggested to Che that we needed to gain time, to wait; he wanted to develop the cadres, to give them experience, and we made him responsible for the group that went to help the revolutionaries in present-day Zaire. They went through Tanzania, crossed Lake Tanganyika. There were around 100 Cubans and they were there for several months.

"He followed the line of teaching the Zairians how to fight. Cubans and Zairian patriots fought shoulder to shoulder against white mercenaries and the troops sent by the government. There were many battles against the mercenaries; but the idea, of course, was not to fight the Africans' war, the Zairians' war, but to help them, to teach them how to fight.

"But that movement was still very incipient, it wasn't strong enough, it didn't have enough unity, and in the end the Zairian revolutionary chiefs decided to suspend the struggle and the

9 Currently the Republic of Congo.



In 1963, Che, Raúl and Fidel marched at the head of the May Day parade in Revolution Square.



Che and his wife Aleida with their children: Aleida, Camilo, Celia and Ernesto.



Che and Fidel.

personnel was withdrawn....

"Che, who had spent about seven months in Zaire, remained for a while in Tanzania analyzing his experiences in the Congo. His conduct on that mission was, as always, exemplary and impeccable...."¹⁰

His mission as ambassador of the ideas of the Cuban Revolution had reached its conclusion. A new task which he was to carry out in a personal capacity was awaiting him, a logical outcome of the life of a person who was able to proclaim:

Our every action is a battle cry against Imperialism and a call for the unity of the peoples against the great enemy of the human race: The United States of North America.

Wherever death may surprise us, let it be welcome if our battle cry has reached even one receptive ear, if another hand reaches out to take up our arms, and other men come forward to join in our funeral dirge with the rattling of machine guns and with new cries of battle and victory.¹¹

From March 1965, Che ceased to appear in public events. This meant that enemy propaganda started to spread the most diverse rumors on the possible causes of his mysterious disappearance. In October, his farewell letter to Fidel Castro was made public, while he was still in the Congo.

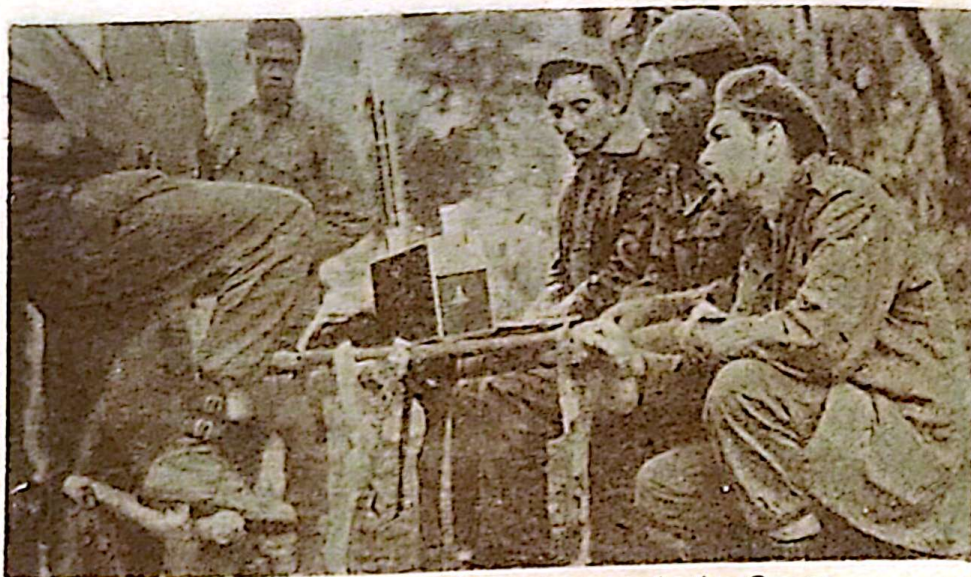
**Havana
Year of Agriculture**

Fidel:

At this moment I remember many things — when I met you in Marla Antonia's house, when you suggested my coming, all the tensions involved in the preparations.

10 Gianni Minà: *Un encuentro con Fidel*, pp. 323-324. Council of State Publishing Office, Havana, 1997.

11 Ernesto Che Guevara: *Message to the Tricontinental meeting*, April 16, 1967.



Che at a meeting with combatants in the Congo.



Imparting a lesson to combatants in the Congo.



Carrying one of the natives in his arms.

One day they asked who should be notified in case of death, and the real possibility of that fact affected all. Later we knew that it was true, that in revolution one wins or dies (if it is a real one). Many comrades fell along the way to victory.

Today everything is less dramatic because we are more mature. But the fact is repeated. I feel that I have fulfilled the part of my duty that tied me to the Cuban Revolution in its territory, and I say good-bye to you, the comrades, your people, who are already mine.

I formally renounce my position in the National Leadership of the Party, my post as Minister, my rank of major, and my Cuban citizenship. Nothing legal binds me to Cuba. The only ties are of another nature; those which cannot be broken as appointments can.

Recalling my past life, I believe I have worked with sufficient honor and dedication to consolidate the revolutionary triumph. My only serious failing was not having confided more in you from the first moment in the Sierra Maestra, and not having understood quickly enough your qualities as a leader and a revolutionary.

I have lived magnificent days and I felt at your side the pride of belonging to our people in the brilliant yet sad days of the Caribbean Crisis.

Few times has a statesman been more brilliant than you in those days. I am also proud of having followed you without hesitation, identifying myself with your way of thinking and of appraising dangers and principles.

Other nations of the world call for my modest efforts. I can do that which is denied you because of your responsibility at the head of Cuba, and the time has come for us to part.

I want it known that I do it with mixed feelings of joy and sorrow; I leave here the purest of my hopes as a builder, and the dearest of those I love. And I leave a people that

Crear dos, tres... muchos Vietnam, es la consigna

de la hora de los hours y no se ha
de ver más que la luz
de la hora

Ya se han cumplido 21 años desde el fin de la
última conflagración mundial y diversas publicaciones
~~del mundo~~, en infinidad de lenguas, celebran el acontecimen-
to simbolizado ~~por~~ ^{en} la derrota del Japón.

Hay un clima de aparente optimismo en ^{muchos} los sectores
en que los de los diversos campos en que el mundo se
divide.

21 años sin guerra mundial, en estos ^{tiempos} de
confrontaciones mínimas, de choques violentos y combates
repentinos, por una cosa muy alta. Pero, sin
analizar los resultados prácticos de ~~la paz~~ de esa paz
por lo que todos nos manifestamos dispuestos a luchar
(la miseria, la depredación, la explotación cada vez
mayor de unos por otros del mundo) cabe preguntarse
si ~~esta~~ ^{esta} es real.

No es la intención de estos datos históricos de di-
versos conflictos de carácter local que se han sucedido
desde la rendición del Japón, del 20. Tampoco, muestra
tarea hacer el recuento, numerosos y variados, de los
crímenes ocurridos durante estos años de pretendida paz.
Podemos poner como ejemplos contra el desmedido optimis-
mo ^{los hechos de} Corea y Vietnam.

En la primera, los ~~20~~ años de falsa paz, la paz

received me as a son. That wounds me deeply. I carry to new battle fronts the faith that you taught me, the revolutionary spirit of my people, the feeling of fulfilling the most sacred of duties: to fight against Imperialism wherever I may be. This comforts and heals the deepest wounds.

I state once more that I free Cuba from any responsibility, except that which stems from its example. If my final hour finds me under other skies, my last thought will be of this people and especially of you. I am thankful for your teaching, your example, and I will try to be faithful to the final consequences of my acts. I have always been identified with the foreign policy of our Revolution, and I will continue to be. Wherever I am, I will feel the responsibility of being a Cuban revolutionary and as such I shall behave. I am not sorry that I leave my children and my wife nothing material. I am happy it is that way. I ask nothing for them, as I know the state will provide enough for their expenses and education.

I would like to say much to you and to our people, but I feel it is not necessary. Words cannot express what I would want them to, and I don't think it's worth while to banter phrases.

Onward to victory always. Patria o Muerte!

I embrace you with all my revolutionary fervor.

Che

Che arrived in Bolivia in November 1966, clean-shaven and disguised as an Uruguayan businessman under the name of Adolfo Mena. He and his comrades based themselves in the Ñancahuazú estate purchased by the Bolivian guerrilla fighter Coco Peredo.

In the following 11 months the guerrilla force operated in an area bounded by Santa Cruz and Camiri in the east and Valle Grande and the town of Padilla in the west.



Before leaving for Bolivia they trained in Pinar del Río.



With Fidel Castro before his departure for Bolivia.



Self-portrait.

VII. PRINCIPAL COMBATS WAGED BY THE GUERRILLA DETACHMENT IN BOLIVIA

- March 23. Nancahuazú.
- April 10. Iripiti.
- April 25. El Mezón.
- May 30. Cuadriculado.
- May 31. Espino.
- June 26. Río Seco.
- July 6. Samaipata.
- July 27. La Cruz.
- July 30. El Rosita.
- September 26. La Higuera.
- October 8. Quebrada del Yuro.

In the Quebrada del Yuro combat, with a wounded leg which made it impossible for him to walk, his weapon destroyed by enemy fire and without any bullets left in his pistol, Che was taken prisoner in the evening and taken to the town of La Higuera, where he was kept as a prisoner and on October 9 was murdered by orders from the highest-ranking Bolivian authorities, who were being advised by the CIA.

His body was transferred to Valle Grande, where he was exhibited and photographed by press correspondents.

At the time of his death Ernesto Che Guevara was 39 years old. They murdered him because in life he was a very dangerous man for the oppressors of the peoples. Today he is a giant, his revolutionary ideas have never been forgotten, as was expressed by Fidel Castro:

"...As a revolutionary Che had the virtues which could be defined as the most accurate expression of the virtues of a revolutionary: a perfect and integral man, a man of absolute honesty and sincerity, a man who led a stoic and Spartan life,



During the first moments in the Bolivian jungle.



With combatant Loyola Guzmán.



Ernesto Che Guevara, Harry Villegas (*Pombo*).

a man whose conduct was practically irreproachable. Because of his virtues he constituted what could be called a true model of a revolutionary."

"He left us his revolutionary thinking, his revolutionary virtues, his character, his willpower, his tenacity, his work spirit. To sum up, he left us his example! And Che's example should be the model to be followed by our people, Che's example should be the ideal model for our people!"¹²

This is the Che we knew, better said, whom we know, because as Fidel said at one time, one cannot speak of Ernesto Guevara in the past.

Che lives on in the heart of every Cuban, in the memory of all those who knew him in other parts of the world; he will always be present, with his spirit of sacrifice and his hopes, in the successes we are capable of achieving. Today, like never before, his presence is even greater in the unstoppable march of the Revolution.

VIII. COMBATANTS IN CHE'S GUERRILLA GROUP WHO DIED IN BOLIVIA

Juan Vitalio Acuña Núñez Cuban. (Died in the ambush in the Puerto Mauricio ford on August 31, 1967.)

David Adrlazola Velzaga Bolivian. (Murdered in La Paz after heroically resisting on December 31, 1969.)

Jalme Arana Campero Bolivian. (Fell in the battle of the Cajones area on October 12, 1967.)

¹² Fidel Castro: "Speech given at the solemn ceremony in memory of commander Ernesto Che Guevara." *Ediciones el Orientador Revolucionario* (OR-26), pp. 42 and 45.

Apollnar Aquino Quispe. Bolivian. (Died in the ambush in the Puerto Mauricio ford on August 31, 1967.)

Seraplo Aquino Tudela. Bolivian. (Died at the Iquirá ravine on July 9, 1967.)

Walter Arancibia Ayala. Boliviano. (Died in the ambush in the Puerto Mauricio ford on August 31, 1967.)

Haydée Tamara Bunke Bider. Argentine-German. (Died at the ambush in the Puerto Mauricio ford on August 31, 1967. Her body was found seven days later.)

Restituto José Cabrera Flores. Peruvian. (Taken prisoner and murdered on September 4, 1967.)

Carlos Coello. Cuban. (Died in the area of Piray on June 26, 1967.)

Octavio de la Concepción de la Pedraja. Cuban. (Died in the battle of the Cajones area on October 12, 1967.)

Casildo Condori Vargas. Bolivian. (Died in the ambush at Peñón Colorado on June 2, 1967.)

Benjamín Coronado Córdova. Bolivian. (Drowned in the Río Grande on February 26, 1967.)

Simón Cuba Sarabla. Bolivian. (Murdered at the schoolhouse at La Higuera on October 9, 1967.)

Juan Pablo Chang Navarro. Peruvian. (Murdered at the schoolhouse at La Higuera on October 9, 1967.)

Alberto Fernández Montes de Oca. Cuban. (Died in the battle of Quebrada del Yuro on October 8, 1967.)

Lucio Edilberto Galván Hidalgo. Peruvian. (Died in the battle of the Cajones area on October 12, 1967.)

Molsés Guevara Rodríguez. Bolivian. (Died in the ambush in the Puerto Mauricio ford on August 31, 1967.)

Marlo Gutiérrez Ardaya. Bolivian. (Died in the ambush at Batán ravine on September 26, 1967.)

Manuel Hernández Osorio. Cuban. (Died in the ambush at Batán ravine on September 26, 1967.)

Francisco Huanca Flores. Bolivian. (Died in the battle of the Cajones area on October 12, 1967.)

Antonio Jiménez Tardío. Bolivian. (Died in the ambush at

the Iñaos mountains on August 9, 1967.)

Gustavo Machín Hoed de Beche. Cuban. (Died in the ambush in the Puerto Mauricio ford on August 31, 1967.)

José María Martínez Tamayo. Cuban. (Died in the ambush on the margins of the Rosita River on July 30, 1967.)

René Martínez Tamayo. Cuban. (Died in the battle of Quebrada del Yuro on October 8, 1967.)

Freddy Maymura Hurtado. Bolivian. (Murdered near the Puerto Mauricio ford on August 31, 1967.)

Julio Luis Méndez Korne. Bolivian. (Died in the last ambush in Mataral on November 15, 1967.)

Orlando Pantoja Tamayo. Cuban. (Died in the battle of Quebrada del Yuro on October 8, 1967.)

Guldo Álvaro Peredo Leigue. Bolivian. (Murdered in the city of La Paz after heroic resistance, on September 9, 1969.)

Roberto Peredo Leigue. Bolivian. (Died in the battle of the Batán ravine on September 26, 1967.)

Raúl Quispaya Choque. Bolivian. (Died in the ambush on the margins of the Rosita River on July 30, 1967.)

Eliseo Reyes Rodríguez. Cuban. (Died in the battle of El Mesón estate on April 25, 1967.)

Israel Reyes Zayas. Cubano. (Died in the ambush in the Puerto Mauricio ford on August 31, 1967.)

Aniceto Reinaga Gordillo. Bolivian. (Died in Quebrada del Yuro on October 8, 1967.)

Antonlo Sánchez Díaz. Cuban. (Died in the ambush in Peñón Colorado on June 2, 1967.)

Jesús Suárez Gayol. Cuban. (Died in the battle at the confluence of the Iripiti and Nancahuazú Rivers on April 10, 1967.)

Lorgio Vaca Marchetti. Bolivian. (Drowned in the Río Grande on March 16, 1967.)

Jorge Vázquez Vlaña. Bolivian. (Wounded in the battle of Taperillas, disappeared on April 22, 1967. Taken prisoner and launched from a helicopter into the Bolivian jungle.)



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At the time of his death Ernesto Che Guevara was 39 years old. Today his revolutionary ideas will never be forgotten, as was expressed by Fidel Castro:

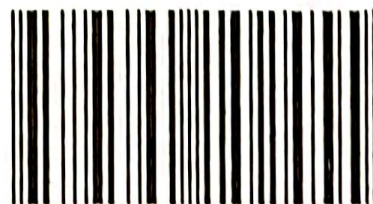
"He left us his revolutionary thinking, his revolutionary virtues, his character, his willpower, his tenacity, his work spirit. To sum up, he left us his example! And Che's example should be the model to be followed by our people, Che's example should be the ideal model for our people!"

Fidel Castro Ruz
October 18, 1967



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